

TINY FLAME

MONDAY, APRIL 14, 2008

Misunderstanding Science.

The following article is from the NewsBlog at The Scientist. Go to the source [here](#).

Ge-what-ics?: Nation's teenager

Posted by [Bob Grant](#)

A significant portion of American high schoolers have seriously flawed ideas about genetics, according to a [study](#) conducted by the country's largest society for genetics professionals.

The study, which was published in this month's issue of *Genetics*, contained some fallacy-ridden quotations from the student essays. Here are some of the notable examples:

"When people who cannot have children and want their own from their own blood, meaning having their genes, what will stop them from putting some cells into a cow to get their child?"

"Genetics create a perfect being. Change the genes. Make that child perfect. There's no better solution to an impending health care crisis. A perfect child means that health care can be focused on an aging generation of people. What we can have is a sea of people who all look brilliant, who are all smart and who all have perfect eyes, nose and lips. It's a perfect society, what more could we want?"

The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) reviewed 500 essays on genetics submitted by ninth through twelfth graders for the National DNA Day Essay Contest in 2006 and 2007, and found that more than 50 percent of submissions contained at least one "obvious misconception" concerning the study of genetics. Approximately 20 percent contained two or more misconceptions.

The essayists were asked to answer one of three questions: 1) Why is it important for everyone to know about genetics? 2) If you could be a human genetics researcher, what would you study and why? 3) In what ways will knowledge of genetics and genomics make changes to health and health care in the United States possible?

According to the ASHG report, many students misunderstood the complexity of genetic research, including biotechnology and genetic engineering, and failed to

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accurately portray concepts related to heredity and patterns of inheritance -- such as the fact that even simple traits are usually influenced by multiple genes.

The authors of the study wrote that "a strategic effort to improve secondary genetics education is especially needed," and encouraged working scientists to become more involved in K-12 classroom education.

The winners of this year's essay contest will be announced on April 25th, coinciding with [National DNA Day](#).

POSTED BY JAIME AT 12:01 PM

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